

Office of the Attorney General
State of Tennessee

*1 Opinion No. U93-19
February 26, 1993

Emergency Communications District/Installation of Road Signs

The Honorable Steve McDaniel
State Representative
202 War Memorial Building
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0163

QUESTION

Whether the board of directors of an emergency communications district, acting pursuant to the provisions of T.C.A. § 7-86-101 et seq., may expend district revenues for the acquisition and installation of highway, road, and street signs.

OPINION

It is the opinion of this office that the board of directors of an emergency communications district does not have the authority to expend district revenues for the acquisition and installation of highway, road, and street signs.

ANALYSIS

The Emergency Communications District Law, T.C.A. §§ 7-86-101-7-86-151 (1992), permits a municipal or county legislative body, after a referendum, to create an emergency communications district. T.C.A. § 7-86-102, which sets forth the legislative intent in enacting the Emergency Communications District Law, states the general assembly's finding that "the establishment of the number 911 as the primary emergency telephone number will provide a single, primary, three-digit emergency telephone number through which emergency service can be quickly and efficiently obtained and will make a significant contribution to law enforcement and other public service efforts requiring quick notification of public service personnel."

T.C.A. § 7-86-105 allows for the appointment of a board of directors to run the emergency communications district. Under T.C.A. § 7-86-107, the board of directors is to create an emergency communications service capable of using at least one of four methods of responding to emergency calls: direct dispatch, referral, relay, or transfer. These four types of 911 service are specifically defined in T.C.A. § 7-86-103; each type of 911 service provides a system whereby a public service

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answering point helps a caller get connected with the appropriate emergency service units. Under T.C.A. § 7-86-103(11), "911 service" is defined to include "lines and equipment necessary for the answering, transferring and dispatching of public emergency telephone calls originated by persons within the serving area who dial 911."

There is no provision in the Emergency Communications District Law that would authorize the board of directors of a district to expend district revenues for the acquisition and installation of highway, road, and street signs. Such signs could help emergency units find those in need of assistance more quickly. Providing signs for emergency units is not, however, within the purposes of an emergency communications district. An emergency communications district is authorized to set up a system for connecting a caller with the appropriate emergency units; the 911 service can provide "lines and equipment for the answering, transferring and dispatching of public emergency telephone calls." T.C.A. § 7-86-103(11). The district is not authorized to expend funds to provide services other than emergency telephone services.

*2 Thus, it is the opinion of this office that an emergency communications district does not have the authority to use district revenues to acquire and install road signs.

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